

**PRESS RELEASE**

DATE: Friday 18 March 2022

**Increased levels of pharmacy appointments launched to improve GP access in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin**

A national service to improve access to more complex GP appointments, by referring patients with minor illness to pharmacists for treatment, has been launched by NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

The NHS GP referral to Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS) has been introduced to the county to improve access to appointments and provide more convenient treatment closer to patients’ homes.

The county’s local healthcare commissioners are now rolling out the service where patients with minor illnesses, such as skin rashes, aches and pains, will be offered a same-day appointment with a local Community Pharmacist in the first instance.

All referrals to the service will be managed by a receptionist within the practice, specifically trained to refer patients to the best healthcare professional for their needs. Brief details of the patient’s minor illness symptoms will be taken and, if the patient agrees, a referral will be sent to their pharmacy of choice.

Patients will then be telephoned by the Community Pharmacist within an agreed time to discuss symptoms and advise upon treatment options. Should a patient need to be escalated or referred to an alternative service following consultation, this can be quickly and easily arranged by the pharmacy.

Claire Parker, Director of Partnerships at NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin CCG, said: “The Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS) will be of huge benefit to many of our patients as it will help to free up GP appointments for patients with more complex health needs.

“Pharmacists are a valuable member of the primary care team in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, alongside our GPs, practice nurses and physiotherapists, and this service will help to utilise their skills even more.

“Pharmacists are highly trained and skilled clinicians, experienced in treating common illnesses and complaints and can provide free, confidential, expert advice. Many pharmacies can also prescribe medication and are often open at evenings and weekends.

“This new service is part of our overall aim to raise awareness of the many different and specialist healthcare professionals we have at our disposal within GP practices in the county. It is aimed to ensure that everyone has access to treatment at the right time and by the right healthcare professional for their needs.”